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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR FOR 1992 AND PROGRAMME-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

Non-governmental and grass-roots organizations

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

Building on the activities and results reported to the Governing Council in 1991, UNDP cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grass-roots organizations has continued to expand through programmes that support participatory, community-based development; promote dialogue and collaboration between NGOs and grass-roots organizations, Governments and multilateral agencies; encourage and support NGOs and grass-roots involvement in sustainable development activities; and strengthen the impact and sustainability of the development efforts of NGOs and grass-roots groups.

The expansion of UNDP cooperation with NGOs and grass-roots organizations has been taking place within the thematic framework of Governing Council resolution 90/34 and relates to all six areas of focus, and in particular to poverty eradication and grass-roots participation and to environment and natural resource management. In addition to a widening range of initiatives funded by Special Programme Resources, such cooperation is increasingly reflected in country and regional programmes and initiatives.

Within this framework, new activities include, inter alia, the second phase of the Partners in Development Programme; support for NGO and grass-roots involvement in the implementation of Agenda 21 and in projects concerned with global environmental issues; and support for strategic planning and organizational development activities by NGOs.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. During the 1991-1992 biennium, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to expand the scope and level of cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grass-roots organizations. This is in accordance with Governing Council decisions, particularly decision 90/18 of 22 June 1990, in which the Council recognized the particular contribution which such organizations can make, complementary to government efforts, in building national capacity in the areas of poverty alleviation, popular participation, sustainable human development and environment.

2. UNDP plays an increasingly important and effective role in encouraging and supporting community-based participatory and sustainable development. Programmes designed to familiarize Governments, UNDP and NGOs regarding their respective roles and the potential mutual benefits of improved working relationships between them have been successfully supported and carried out. Increased attention is also being given to capacity-building of, and networking among, NGOs and grass-roots organizations, especially with regard to initiatives to alleviate poverty and support environmentally sound development strategies and programmes.

3. The activities that UNDP supports involve principally, but not exclusively, groups and networks that operate at the local and national levels. They build on, and draw upon, both the implementing capacity of such organizations and their resources to engage local communities in sustainable human development efforts through information, education, networking and advocacy. This emphasis recognizes that the contribution of such organizations to building local capacity also constitutes an important element in the diversification and strengthening of civil society. Moreover, as women are often denied access through official channels, NGOs are an important means of reaching out to meet women's needs. The ongoing dialogue that such activities foster between Governments and NGOs promotes the construction of an enabling environment, at the national level, for people-centred development and initiatives.

4. Cooperation with NGOs during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process was a major feature of the UNDP NGO programme in 1991-1992. With the help of the unprecedented level of public participation that the Earth Summit engendered, UNDP was able to establish, at the country, regional and global levels, working relationships with many new actors in the NGO community. UNCED has given new meaning, and expanded scope, to collaboration between Governments, the United Nations system and NGOs. Agenda 21 fully recognizes the role that major groups - which are mostly organized in the form of NGOs - must play in the design and implementation of sustainable development policies and programmes and in governance at all levels.

5. The experience gained by UNDP since the inception in 1986 of the NGO Division (now the NGO Programme) shows that cooperation with NGOs and grass-roots organizations is an asset to the efforts of UNDP in its programming cycles. It benefits both the design of upstream-oriented country, regional and thematic programmes that can draw upon advocacy capacity of NGOs and

grass-roots organizations and the participatory identification, elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities that can have a direct impact on local communities.

II. COOPERATION WITH NGOs IN THE AREAS OF FOCUS OF THE FIFTH PROGRAMMING CYCLE

6. The six areas of focus identified by the Governing Council in paragraph 7 of its decision 90/34 of 23 June 1990 provide for most of UNDP cooperation with NGOs and grass-roots organizations and offer multiple entry points for the mainstreaming of that cooperation into UNDP policies and programmes at all levels. Poverty eradication and grass-roots participation, including women's participation, and environment and natural resource management encapsulate a majority of activities, whether these are funded from indicative planning figures (IPFs), global and interregional programmes, Special Programme Resources (SPR) or extrabudgetary funds.

A. Poverty eradication and grass-roots participation

7. In the area of poverty eradication and grass-roots participation, NGOs have been associated with UNDP activities in Latin America and the Caribbean to develop a regional strategy on poverty and social development for the fifth programming cycle. In addition to participating in a regional thematic session held on these issues in July 1991, one of whose core topics was to discuss participatory avenues for action on poverty, a regional NGO workshop on organizational and survival strategies of the poor was organized in New York in November 1992 to analyse successful approaches by NGOs and the potential for their extension and replication on a wider scale. The workshop was intended as an input to the joint action by the Inter-American Development Bank and UNDP in the area of social reform and poverty, undertaken in late 1992.

8. Most fifth-cycle country programmes explicitly refer to NGOs and grass-roots organizations in relation to poverty eradication, in particular to activities to be undertaken at the local level, where local government, NGOs, community organizations, women's groups and other institutions can develop new synergisms to use scarce resources effectively and maximize the effectiveness of poverty eradication programmes and projects. As a result, the range of opportunities for NGOs to act as implementing agencies of programmes and projects implemented by both national institutions and executing agencies for UNDP projects has increased significantly.

9. IPF resources are also utilized to support multi-year projects to strengthen NGO capacity to alleviate poverty through human resource development, including management training. In Guinea, for instance, a four-year project was approved in 1992 to enhance the managerial and operational capacity of local NGOs. In Indonesia, a project was approved in 1991 to improve the operational capacity of NGOs and strengthen mechanisms for sub-national coordination in the social sector through training and improved field-level exchanges of information.

10. In October 1992, UNDP organized a workshop in Bangladesh on grass-roots participation that examined ways in which UNDP could become more responsive to participatory approaches, with a view to making its programmes more sustainable and developing strategies to promote human development programmes. Together with UNDP staff and outside experts, NGO leaders explained the approaches of their organizations and contributed their experience to these discussions.

11. Using the experience gained during the fourth programming cycle and the positive findings and recommendations from an evaluation conducted in 1990, UNDP launched, in 1992, the second phase of the Partners in Development Programme (PDP-II), a programme that enables Resident Representatives to make grants for direct support of NGO activities at the micro-level. With $7.5 million from SPR for the fifth cycle and $509,000 from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) for 1992-93, PDP-II will, during the 1992-1993 biennium, award grants ranging from $10,000 to $65,000 per country in 73 countries, in support of community-based, self-help initiatives, institution-building of local NGOs and community groups, and strengthening dialogue among NGOs, Governments and UNDP. Preference is given to sustainable activities that support the long-term development objectives of communities. A mid-term evaluation focusing on impact, effectiveness and accountability will be conducted in early 1994 to guide the implementation of this programme during the last three years of the fifth cycle.

B. NGOs and grass-roots organizations eligible for UNDP small-grants funding

12. In line with the UNDP capacity-building mandate, the NGO or grass-roots organization selected to receive an award in all the above small-grants programmes must be a local, community level or national organization or regional or international network composed of local/national NGOs. International NGOs, with headquarters in an industrialized country, are generally not eligible for small project assistance.

C. Environment and natural resource management

13. As regards environment and development, UNDP supported a number of activities involving NGOs and grass-roots organizations in preparation for, and during, UNCED. These included regional NGO meetings on major issues on the UNCED agenda, travel by NGO representatives from developing countries to sessions of the UNCED Preparatory Committee and to the Earth Summit, and activities at the '92 Global Forum held in Rio de Janeiro. Women and indigenous people were important targets for UNDP support. In March 1991, UNDP organized an international NGO consultation in Geneva on the theme "Poverty, Environment and Development", as a contribution to the UNCED secretariat's substantive preparations for this agenda item of the Earth Summit.

14. Under the national UNCED project, which received co-funding from the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway, 23 UNDP field offices were able to support NGO initiatives in the context of the national-level preparatory process, and/or independent NGO activities in that context. In several countries, this effort contributed to establishing or strengthening the

dialogue on environment and development among NGOs as well as between NGOs, Governments and other sectors of society (e.g., the private sector) and the United Nations system.

15. In parallel with the discussion and adoption by UNCED of a section of Agenda 21 on the role of major groups in environment and development, two international consultations with developing country NGOs and non-governmental networks were organized by UNDP in 1992 (one in March, in New York, and the other in Washington, D.C., in September) to identify NGO needs and priorities for their involvement in Agenda 21. As a result, two major areas have been identified for UNDP/NGO cooperation in this area: capacity-building activities for NGOs involved in environment and development; and support for community participation in the implementation and monitoring of Agenda 21 at the national level. As an answer, Capacity 21 explicitly identified mechanisms for public participation in environmental and developmental issues as one of the four requirements for translating Agenda 21 into national-level action and will provide the main framework for post-UNCED UNDP collaboration with NGOs and grass-roots organizations.

16. The Africa 2000 Network, an African regional programme to support grass-roots activities promoting ecologically sustainable development through community groups and NGOs, is fully operational in eleven countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. It is being extended to Ethiopia, Mali and Zambia, with plans to bring into it another six countries. In each participating country, the network operates through a national coordinator and a selection committee responsible for setting national priorities, reviewing applications and granting awards of up to $50,000 to individual projects. The number of projects funded increased from 105 in 1990 to approximately 400 at the end of 1992. Training seminars have been held in the eleven countries. A mid-term evaluation, conducted in early 1992, provided useful recommendations for the strengthening of this unique programme, which has been funded from extrabudgetary contributions received from the Governments of Canada, Denmark, France, Japan and Norway.

17. A related programme, Asia-Pacific 2000, was launched in 1991-1992 to provide support, through small grants, to urban NGOs and grass-roots organizations from the Asia and Pacific region to provide poor communities with affordable environmental services, to strengthen local and national organizations involved in such activities, to encourage networking among community-based groups, NGOs and local government agencies. Asia-Pacific 2000 promotes the extension and replication of successful urban management approaches. Five countries are involved in the pilot phase: India, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

18. An interregional small-grants programme, the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) was initiated in 1992 with the principal objective of promoting "local-local" dialogue amongst municipal authorities, NGOs and grass-roots organizations to improve the quality of the urban environment. To this end, the activities funded will test and demonstrate relevant strategies and projects, strengthen the capacity of the three types of partner institutions to implement local solutions, promote participatory approaches, and mobilize local resources to respond to urban environmental problems. Eight

countries (two from each region) are currently participating: Brazil, Jamaica; Senegal, Tanzania; Egypt, Morocco; Pakistan and Thailand, with plans to bring sixteen other countries into the two-year pilot phase. Currently available resources from interregional IPF, SPR and donor-country cost-sharing will make it possible to allocate $200,000 during 1992-1994 to each of the eight countries. In addition, $580,000 are available to fund, on a subregional, regional or interregional level, selected projects to be implemented through city associations and NGO networks.

19. UNDP has played an important role in promoting effective relations between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and NGOs. It has promoted the participation of NGOs and community groups in planning and implementing GEF projects. It has also supported continuing dialogue between participating Governments, the GEF implementing agencies and the NGO community. Forums for such dialogue have included two NGO consultations on GEF, in Geneva and Washington, D.C., in 1991-1992 and monthly meetings, in Washington, D.C., of the GEF-NGO Task Force established in 1992.

20. UNDP also manages the GEF NGO Small-Grants Programme on behalf of the implementing agencies. This programme provides grants for community-based activities by NGOs and community groups to address problems in the GEF areas - especially, in the case of NGOs, activities to preserve biodiversity, combat land degradation and desertification, reduce global warming and combat the pollution of international waters. It is currently funded at the level of $7 million through 1993. The programme is being established in approximately 30 countries in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, with a national coordinator and national selection committee being designated in each country. Each committee includes representatives from the Government, the NGO community and GEF implementing agencies, as well as specialists in the substantive areas. Support will also be provided under the programme for subregional and regional projects. Wherever possible, close links are established with other UNDP small-grant programme machinery.

21. In addition to the GEF NGO Small-Grants Programme, a number of NGOs and grass-roots organizations offer substantive expertise, operational capacities and participatory methodologies that enable them to be involved, in cooperation with Governments and intergovernmental agencies, in the design and implementation of a number of mainstream GEF projects managed by UNDP. This is particularly the case for projects on biodiversity and land degradation and desertification, which have provided opportunities for UNDP to draw from international NGOs and increasingly from developing country NGOs that have pioneered environmental conservation and rehabilitation activities.

D. Technical cooperation among developing countries

22. Several activities involving NGOs and grass-roots organizations have been supported in the field of technical cooperation among developing countries. SPR funding has been provided to networking activities by grass-roots women's organizations in South Asia and to the promotion of women's organizations for effective community leadership in West Africa.

III. COOPERATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS, UNDP AND NGOs

23. In addition to the activities described above in respect of relations between Governments, UNDP and NGOs, the Regional Bureaux and the NGO Programme have also collaborated to foster greater understanding and cooperation between Governments, the NGO community and UNDP field offices. In Africa, the regional project on collaboration between African Governments, African NGOs and UNDP launched in 1989 had provided, by the end of 1992, services to Governments, NGOs and UNDP in 33 countries, of which nine were afflicted by civil strife or armed conflict. Project assistance was focused on the emergence or reconstruction of mechanisms for cooperation among NGOs as well as between NGOs, Governments and UNDP field offices. In October 1991, two regional workshops on strategic planning were organized and held under the project (one for anglophone Africa, and the other for francophone Africa), with participants from 21 umbrella organizations of African development NGOs. In 1992, a directory of NGOs in Africa was organized and published, with over 2,500 entries covering 43 countries. It is expected that the experience gained through this project will be used as the basis for a fifth-cycle project that will focus on cooperation between Governments, NGOs and UNDP on participatory approaches to poverty eradication in Africa.

24. A national workshop on development cooperation and civil society, with participants from the major national NGO networks, was organized in Mexico City in September 1992 by the UNDP field office, in collaboration with the Government of Mexico. Discussions centred on possible avenues for future cooperation between the Government, NGOs and the United Nations system, with specific reference to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

IV. SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NGOs

25. Using fifth-cycle SPR earmarked for NGOs (subcategory C.9), UNDP supported four activities in 1992: a regional seminar on strategic planning for NGOs providing credit, training and technical cooperation to microentrepreneurs in the urban informal sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to enabling these organizations to scale up their operations; a regional NGO workshop on civil society and poverty eradication in the Asia and Pacific region, with emphasis on institutional development, particularly training and exchange programmes; a regional African workshop on participatory research and evaluation for grass-roots development, with a view to promoting networking and cooperation among organizations working in rural development programmes; and increased developing country NGO participation in major multilateral processes, in particular through the management of the UNCED developing country NGO participation fund. Each of these activities focused on key segments of the NGO community and has already generated follow-up projects. Although only in its inception stage, UNDP collaboration with NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (particularly in the perspective of several of them being classified as least developed countries) should become an important feature of UNDP actions in these countries. More specifically, there will be a need to emphasize the role of civil society in future country programmes.

V. MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN UNDP COOPERATION WITH NGOs AND GRASS-ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

26. UNDP cooperation with NGOs and grass-roots organizations continued to diversify and expand in 1991-1992, in particular thanks to the relevance of the long-standing NGO experience in several of the areas of focus for the fifth programming cycle. As UNDP interface with organizations of civil society broadens, measures must be taken to adjust UNDP policies and procedures in order to strengthen further cooperation within the framework of country programmes.

27. At the country level, NGOs and grass-roots organizations should be consulted during the elaboration of advisory notes and country programmes when programme reviews and evaluations are undertaken.

28. Beneficiaries should participate more systematically in the elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of UNDP-funded programmes and projects of relevance to their communities.

29. NGOs and grass-roots organizations should be regularly included in consultative processes at the country, regional and global levels regarding the development of strategies, programmes and projects to address the areas of focus of UNDP for the fifth cycle, in particular poverty eradication and grass-roots participation in development and environmental problems and natural resource management.